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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 000372

SIPDIS

PARIS FOR JORDAN; LONDON FOR TSOU

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: UPDATE: SARG ACTIONS AGAINST SYRIAN DISSIDENTS
LIVING IN WEST BEIRUT

Classified By: CDA Michael H. Corbin for reasons 1.4 b and d

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Despite well-founded suspicions that the SARG may have used the Hizballah insurrection in West Beirut from May 6-14 to snatch Syrian dissidents in Beirut, our sources have been unable to confirm that this occurred. Syrian human rights activists tell us that they have not heard any substantiated reports that Hizballah or other pro-Syria factions seized Syrian dissidents in Lebanon. Embassy contacts in Damascus remain in regular touch with many Syrian dissidents in Lebanon. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The May 6-14 Hizballah invasion into West Beirut may have presented the ideal opportunity for the SARG to ask its allies to pick up dissident Syrians who believed they were safe in Lebanese Government controlled areas of Beirut. Despite reports of such activity, local contacts say they have not seen any evidence of a Hizballah round-up of Syrian dissidents in Lebanon. On May 21, human rights activist Rezan Zeitunah said that all of the Syrian dissidents in Lebanon with whom she communicates were fine. One was, however, scheduled to have an interview with Lebanese security on May 22, she commented. Zeitunah communicates daily with Lebanon-based Syrian dissidents such as Muhammad Abdullah, Jihad Hassan, and Ahad al-Hindi.

¶3. (C) In addition, on May 22 human rights lawyer Khalil Matook said that he had not heard anything from Lebanon regarding Hizballah or any other pro-Syrian group arresting Syrian dissidents and turning them over to Syrian intelligence. Matook did say that contacts of his in London had asked about such stories. Matook asserted, however, that if Syrian dissidents were being rounded up in Lebanon, either he or one of his colleagues in the human rights community in Syria would surely have heard about it.

¶4. (C) Comment: While we would not be surprised to learn of Syrian inspired action against dissidents in Lebanon during the recent unrest (and will continue to look for it) we have not been able to find any evidence to date.

CORBIN